

How Subcomandante Marcos Employed Strategic Communication to Promote the Zapatista Revolution

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Precisely one month after declaring war on Mexico on New Year's Day, 1994, the Zapatista National Army of Liberation (EZLN) faxed an important request to NGO offices in Mexico.¹ The EZLN requested that the NGOs collectively form a "belt of peace," or a neutral zone, to reduce friction between the EZLN and federal troops while negotiations took place.² NGO involvement in Chiapas played an important role in helping the Zapatistas achieve autonomy over their territory in Chiapas. Ronfeldt, Arquilla, Fuller, and Fuller (1998) emphasize the strategic significance of communication in the Zapatista movement noting, "no matter how small a territory the EZLN held in Chiapas, it quickly occupied more space in the media than had any other insurgent group in Mexico's if not the world's history."³

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos has served as the enigmatic tactician and revolutionary icon of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Chiapas, Mexico. As a former professor of public relations at Metropolitan Autonomous University in Mexico City (UAM), Marcos understood the power of the word.⁴ He helped further the Zapatista movement through his public relations appearances, speeches, interviews, and communiqués against neoliberalism and globalization by drawing international attention to the Zapatista movement. As Barmeyer notes, Marcos' use of magic realism in the construction of a public image for himself and for the "indigenous community" of Chiapas was successful in attracting the attention of urban and international

¹ Niels Barmeyer, *Developing Zapatista Autonomy: Conflict and NGO Involvement in Rebel Chiapas* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 41.

² *Ibid.*

³ David Ronfeldt, John Arquilla, Graham E. Fuller, and Melissa Fuller, *The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1998), 177.

⁴ Nick Henck, *Subcommander Marcos: The Man and the Mask* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

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advocates.⁵ Yet questions remain on how Marcos was able to foster the support of global actors for the Zapatista movement through communication.

To address this knowledge gap, this study will examine Marcos' communiqués from December 31, 1993 to February 16, 1996. Prior to December 31, 1993, the EZLN largely operated clandestinely and focused on military preparation.⁶ On January 1, 1994, the EZLN declared war on Mexico, thus marking the insurgency's public debut and the inception of the EZLN communications campaign, which was largely (though not solely) driven by Marcos. While arguably the EZLN campaign (which has changed course over the years to adapt to different political circumstances) continues to exist, it generally provokes a feebler public response than it did in the timeframe examined.

While the EZLN's origins are debatable, Shapiro traces it to the Frente Nacional de Liberación (FLN), an obscure "anti-Soviet, pro-Cuban Guevarista" Mexican insurgency active in the late 1960s and 1970s,⁷ and posits that the EZLN was initially conceived as the military arm of a tripartite FLN structure.⁸ The Mexican government (and less overtly, the United States government)⁹ opposed the EZLN and tried to suppress the 1994 Zapatista uprising through military force and restricting Mexican media coverage of the uprising through Televisa, a state-controlled television network.¹⁰ While the Zapatistas' initial use of military power elicited a violent response from the Mexican government, the Zapatistas' strategic communications effort likely sparked greater worldwide empathy and outrage over the Mexican government's treatment of the impoverished Mexican underclass than the Zapatistas' violent protests. At a time when the world was scrutinizing Mexico as a result of its entry into NAFTA, the EZLN successfully reached beyond Mexico to independent journalists and national and international civil society actors to circumvent the government's attempts to isolate their struggle.¹¹ According to Cleaver, "a key aspect of the state's war

⁵ Barmeyer, *Developing Zapatista Autonomy*.

⁶ Milt Shapiro, *The Origins of the Zapatista National Army of Liberation (EZLN)* (Washington: Committee of Indigenous Solidarity, December 2000).

⁷ The FLN emerged from the Ejército Insurgente Mexicano (EIM), which operated from Monterrey, Mexico in the late 1960s in preparation for a socialist revolution. After engaging in minor guerrilla combat in Chiapas, nine EIM members, mostly middle-class graduates of University of Nuevo León, met in August 1969 in Monterrey to form the FLN (Shapiro 2000).

⁸ Shapiro, *The Origins of the Zapatista National Army of Liberation (EZLN)*, 8.

⁹ A 1996 U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report acknowledges that U.S.-supplied helicopters were "misused" to transport Mexican troops to the Chiapas conflict zone in violation of the "transfer agreement" (15). GAO and the El Paso, TX-based National Commission for Democracy in Mexico concur that a lack of U.S. accountability for how U.S. counternarcotics aid is spent in Mexico has permitted the Mexican government to utilize U.S. military resources for anti-Zapatista combat. However, the GAO report further states, "Mexico had to focus funds and resources in the southern state of Chiapas on its effort to suppress an insurgency movement. In doing so, the government required the use of Mexican military, police, other personnel, equipment, and resources that might otherwise have been used for counternarcotics purposes" (10). Thus, GAO is tacitly affirming the Mexican government's use of counternarcotics tools to forcibly suppress the Zapatistas.

¹⁰ Harry Cleaver, "The Zapatistas and the Electronic Fabric of Struggle," accessed November 5, 2010, <https://webspace.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/zaps.html>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

against the Zapatistas (both in Mexico and elsewhere) has been its ongoing efforts to isolate them, so that they can be destroyed or forced to accept co-optation. In turn, the Zapatistas and their supporters have fought to maintain and elaborate their political connections throughout the world."¹² When its efforts to suppress the Zapatistas' public relations efforts faltered, the Mexican state issued a counter-information campaign to frame the Zapatistas as a foreign criminal entity,¹³ which Marcos vehemently denied in his communiqués.

On February 16, 1996, the Zapatistas signed the San Andrés Accords with the Mexican government. The signing of the agreement was a significant gain for the Zapatistas, as it accorded indigenous Mexicans constitutional inclusion, the "right to self-determination and autonomy," and enhanced political participation.

In this study, I will analyze and interpret the qualitative findings on the patterns and recurring strategic communications techniques of Marcos' discourse that facilitated the involvement of national and global actors in the Zapatista movement. This study identifies and analyzes the following categorical clusters observed in Marcos' communiqués: Visibility and Voice, The "Evil Government," The Quest for Dignity, Uniting Under a Nationalist and Protectionist Framework, Neoliberal Capitalism, and Use of Metaphor.

For the purposes of this study, "national and global actors" will be defined as Mexican national and global civil society organizations that are concerned with protecting and empowering impoverished, marginalized, and disadvantaged groups. "Communication strategies" will be broadly defined as public relations activities, communiqués, interviews, language usage, literary techniques, or other communications tools that Marcos implemented as a strategic course of action to achieve a political goal. "Strategy" will be defined as an executed or proposed course of action to achieve a previously identified goal or objective. The "Zapatistas" will be defined as individuals and groups allied with the EZLN at any point from December 31, 1993 to February 16, 1996. In this study, "civil society" refers to "a realm of social life . . . institutionally separate from territorial state institutions."¹⁴

Finally, this study concludes by identifying a grounded theory as to what type of language, advocacy discourse, and representations, combined with other sociopolitical factors, enabled Marcos to harness the assistance of national and global actors for the EZLN. This study finds that Marcos altered preexisting discourses to achieve maximum mobilization for the Zapatista movement and maximum appeal to national and global actors. Marcos employed the language of the Latin American indigenous rights movement of the early 1990s,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Perhaps as a way to simultaneously undermine the Zapatistas' media presence and justify the use of U.S.-supplied military resources that were earmarked for counternarcotics offensives.

¹⁴ John Keane, "Civil Society, Definitions and Approaches," accessed August 6, 2009, http://www.johnkeane.net/pdf_docs/civil_society/jk_civil_society_definitions_encyclopedia.pdf, 1.

underscoring the inherent dignity of Mexico's indigenous peoples and the value of their inclusion (and pluriculturality in general) in Mexican society. He also contributed to the preexisting globalized discourse of human rights, framing the Mexican government as a violator of such rights. He contributed to the prevailing hegemonic discourse of neoliberal policies, which generally highlighted the merits of such policies, arguing that they are "evil" and that their homogenizing effects would destroy indigenous ways of life. He also revived the nationalistic discourse of the Mexican Revolution, particularly that of Emiliano Zapata who championed agrarian reform, and decried foreign ownership of Mexican natural resources.

Importantly, this study will further our understanding of how and why Marcos' radical and unique communication strategies appealed to global actors in the time period following Mexico's entry into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) until the Zapatistas signed the San Andrés Accords with the Mexican government on February 16, 1996. These findings will reveal how the Zapatistas might achieve more sociopolitical power within Mexico. They will also aim to facilitate the assistance of national and global actors in preventing the ongoing human rights abuses, intimidation, and discrimination that the Zapatistas continue to bear.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This study employs an advocacy/participatory approach to develop a theory to explain how Marcos used communication strategies to garner the attention and aid of global actors for the Zapatista movement. Likewise, this study assumes a pragmatic worldview in that it is concerned with revealing practical, feasible, and nonviolent ways to introduce and maintain positive socioeconomic and political changes for the *campesinos* of Chiapas, Mexico. These changes include many of the demands that Marcos made of the Mexican government on behalf of the *campesinos*, including reducing poverty, improving the working terms and conditions of the farmers, improving healthcare in the Chiapas region, reducing human rights abuses of the locals by the Mexican government, and improving democratic participation and visibility of the *campesinos* in the Mexican (and perhaps international) political sphere.

The conflict paradigm draws upon the work of Marx, who argued that "social behavior could best be seen as a process of conflict: the attempt to dominate others and to avoid being dominated," particularly in terms of socioeconomic.¹⁵ Gramsci further developed Marx's thought by "stressing the active, voluntarist side of marxist theory, as opposed to the fatalistic reliance upon objective economic forces and scientific laws. Such laws, he frequently told us, were incapable of embracing the complexity and qualitative properties of

¹⁵ Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education, 2007), 34-35.

social life.”¹⁶ Gramscian thought focuses on the existence of a hegemony of ideas, values, and beliefs to control and manipulate mass consciousness and perpetuate the hegemonic ideology, thereby subordinating the proletariat to the ideology of the ruling.¹⁷ Thus, Gramscian thought offers a more socially and politically focused view of conflict than traditional Marxist thought, which is biased toward a rational, mechanistic view of it. The conflict paradigm encompasses ethnic struggles in addition to socioeconomic inequalities¹⁸ and thus applies well to the Zapatista movement, which is characterized by both ethnic and class conflicts.

Moreover, this qualitative study employs a grounded theory approach flowing inductively from the conflict paradigm.¹⁹ Glaser and Strauss define grounded theory as “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social science research.” The emerging and evolving nature of grounded theory research lends itself well to this study, as it imposes minimal constraints on the exploration of new ideas.

Ample evidence from prior studies illustrates the extent to which the Mexican political system has historically oppressed the Chiapan *campesinos* of diverse indigenous heritage.²⁰ In this sense, Marcos’ anti-neoliberalism and anti-globalization communiqués, his public relations efforts, and the creation of his own enigmatic “folkhero” persona, can be understood as a response to a deeply seated conflict: the historic attempts of the Mexican government and military to subjugate the marginalized, impoverished, and desperate indigenous peasants of Chiapas. Marcos’ writings and interviews illustrate the Zapatistas’ efforts to assert autonomy over the Chiapas region, to improve poor Chiapan residents’ socioeconomic status, and, significantly, to create a public space for dialogue on behalf of the Chiapan *campesinos* and indigenous peoples in the Mexican political sphere – indeed, to make them *visible* to the greater Mexican public and the world. Marcos worked to undermine Mexico’s attempts to dominate both the peoples of Chiapas in an economic class and ethnic struggle and to control the Mexican information space.²¹

This study draws upon Gramscian insight into how civil society offers a pragmatic arena for marginalized groups, such as the Zapatistas, to counter hegemonic social norms. Katz notes that, according to Gramsci, civil society “is dialectically where the existing hegemonic social order is maintained but also the

¹⁶ Joseph Femia, “The Gramsci Phenomenon: Some Reflections,” *Political Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1979): 473.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*.

¹⁹ Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

²⁰ See John Womack, Jr., *Rebellion in Chiapas: an historical reader* (New York: The New Press, 1999); Jan Rus, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, and Shannon L. Mattiace, *Mayan Lives, Mayan Utopias: The Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas and the Zapatista Rebellion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003); Stephen E. Lewis, *The Ambivalent Revolution: Forging State and Nation in Chiapas, 1910-1945* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005).

²¹ Ronfeldt, et al., *The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico*.

realm of social creativity, where a new social order can emerge."²² For victims of a hegemonic social order, Gramscian thought conceives of civil society as often the only recourse through which these oppressed individuals or groups might challenge the ruling elites.²³ Thus, exploring how Marcos reached out to civil society offers a pragmatic means of improving the socioeconomic and political situation of the casualties of a hegemonic social system; in this case, Marcos identifies that hegemonic system as neoliberalism.

Importantly, this study draws upon the Feminist Standpoint Theory of social science research. Although the standpoint theory was originally conceived in a feminist context, it may be appropriately applied to explore the claims and standpoints of other oppressed groups besides women, such as the Zapatistas. Like the conflict paradigm, the Standpoint Theory is rooted in the work of Marx.²⁴ Hekman notes that the "epistemological and methodological argument" of the Feminist Standpoint Model originated from the work of Hartsock as a way "to define the nature of the truth claims that feminists advance and to provide a methodological grounding that will validate those claims."²⁵ Hekman outlines the central premises of Standpoint Theory: "that knowledge is situated in particular contexts . . . , that it is perspectival, and that there are multiple standpoints from which knowledge is produced."²⁶ Hekman explains Hartsock's argument: "first, that material life structures and sets limits to the understanding of social relations; second, that the ruling class structures the material relations of a society and hence its definition of the 'real'; and, third, that the vision available to oppressed groups must be achieved through struggle."²⁷ Thus, standpoint theory is closely linked to the social constructivism approach, in which individuals develop subjective interpretations of their life experiences.²⁸

LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the literature on the Zapatistas, two main themes and two subthemes emerged. First, Domínguez²⁹ and Muñoz Ramírez³⁰ articulated the political context of the Zapatista rebellion in response to Mexico's entry into

²² Hagai Katz, "Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 335.

²³ *Ibid.*, 336.

²⁴ Susan Hekman, "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited," *Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 22, no. 2 (January 1997): 341-366

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 341.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 342.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 346.

²⁸ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009).

²⁹ Jorge I. Domínguez, "The Scholarly Study of Mexican politics," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 377-410.

³⁰ Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, ed., *The Fire & the Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2008).

NAFTA. To get a sense of the EZLN's political achievements, Domínguez³¹ analyzed Mexican political change since 1990, focusing on the political origins of economic troubles and policies including NAFTA and the 1994 to 1995 financial crisis. The following political events are examined: the decline of the PRI, the presidency, and official labor unions; the role of the Zapatista movement and urban rebellions; and the reviving of Congress, the Supreme Court, and state governments. Findings on political parties, public opinion, and elections are presented.

Also, this study drew upon Muñoz Ramírez's³² contribution on how the EZLN took advantage of the political opportunity provided by Mexico's passage of NAFTA in 1994. He asserts that while NAFTA negatively impacted living conditions in southern Mexico, it also generated issues and political openings that served to mobilize the EZLN, enabling them to push for human rights protections and drawing international attention to their plight.

The second salient theme is advocacy, with two subthemes of advocacy networks and strategic advocacy discourse. To explore the role of advocacy networks in facilitating the support of global actors, this study will draw upon the seminal work of Keck and Sikkink.³³ This work discusses the role and significance of transnational advocacy networks in international politics, especially their ability to alter the practice of national sovereignty.³⁴ Methods include examining four historical movements prior to the existence of contemporary advocacy networks, three contemporary cases in which transnational organizations play a significant role, and transnational campaigns pertaining to human rights, women's rights, and the environment.³⁵ This grounded theory study draws upon the work of constructivists in international relations theory and social movement theorists in comparative politics.³⁶ It seeks to address the following research questions: "What is a transnational advocacy network? Why and how do they emerge? How do advocacy networks work? Under what conditions can they be effective?"³⁷ The study finds that these networks share several common characteristics: "the centrality of values or principled ideas, the belief that individuals can make a difference, the creative use of information, and the employment by nongovernmental actors of sophisticated political strategies in targeting their campaigns."³⁸

³¹ Domínguez, "The Scholarly Study of Mexican politics."

³² Gloria Muñoz Ramírez, *The Fire & the Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement*.

³³ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

To examine the link between certain forms of advocacy discourse and networks, this study employs the work of Pitarch, Speed, and Leyva Solano.³⁹ This contribution explores the relationship between globalized discourses (such as human rights) and local cultures, including how human rights work within a neoliberal state, and how human rights discourse offers new possibilities for helping oppressed groups. By studying the Maya region of Chiapas and Guatemala, the study provides a comparative look at the complexity and diversity of global-local-state interactions even within a geographically constrained area. The study provides insight into ways in which human rights are positioned within political structures and how local actors are engaging in human rights discourse within these structures to yield an improved understanding of culture, power, and agency in globalization.

Additionally, this study will also draw upon the seminal work of Ronfeldt, Arquilla, Fuller, and Fuller, which demonstrates the two subthemes of advocacy networks and strategic discourse.⁴⁰ This work examines the causes of the Zapatista uprising, the characteristics of the Zapatistas and their supporters, how they used social networking to further their cause, and their information operations. The central theme is the Zapatistas' successful use of social networking technologies ("Netwar") to mobilize supporters against Mexico's political system. The study concludes that the Zapatistas' successful social Netwar sparked similar unrest in other parts of the country.

Continuing with the theoretical foundation laid by Ronfeldt, Arquilla, Fuller, and Fuller, Adler Hellman argues that while electronic communication has aided activist networks, it has also facilitated the proliferation of an overly simplified, partial, and distorted understanding of the conflict in Chiapas, which may put activists at a political disadvantage. She outlines the politically significant complexities of the conflict that have been lost or overlooked by activists in transmission to outsiders.

Another salient contribution to the subthemes of advocacy discourse and strategic advocacy networks is the work of Brysk in examining the international relations of Indian rights.⁴¹ The study's methods consist of a combination of interviews, fieldwork, and document analysis conducted from 1992 to mid-1998 with indigenous advocacy leaders in Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Bolivia, active between the 1960s through the 1990s.⁴² Brysk mapped the transnational network in 1992, observed the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in 1993, and studied in Ecuador in 1995.⁴³ Brysk argues that "conventionally powerless people have used global symbolic appeals and

³⁹ Pedro Pitarch, Shannon Speed, and Xochitl Leyva Solano, *Human Rights in the Maya Region* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰ Ronfeldt, et al., *The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico*.

⁴¹ Allison Brysk, *Economic Adjustment and Ethnic Conflict in Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1995), x.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xi.

normative reconstructions of international forces to transform their own lives and to pioneer a new form of politics."⁴⁴

To further explore the subtheme of strategic discourse in grassroots advocacy, Barmeyer maintains that the EZLN framed their communications campaign in such a way that urban and international advocates associated "the indigenous community" with utopian ideals.⁴⁵ This study focuses on identifying EZLN's existential contradictions and the factors that enabled them to mobilize civil society. Methods used include Barmeyer's volunteer experience and fieldwork in Zapatista communities, case studies from San Emiliano and La Gardenia, and narratives by Zapatista community teachers.

To contribute to the subtheme of strategic discourse in the Zapatista movement, Henck critiques the theory that by claiming the rebellion was fought on behalf of indigenous peoples, Marcos, Zapatista spokesperson and military leader, calculated on gaining world sympathy.⁴⁶ Using interviews with Marcos from the first day of the rebellion, he argues that this claim is unsubstantiated.

In another significant contribution to the subtheme of strategic discourse, Speed conducted a "multi-sited ethnography" to examine the discourse of human rights through various social and political terrains in Chiapas from 1995 to 2004.⁴⁷ Using an activist approach, Speed studied the *Red de Defensores Comunitarios por los Derechos Humanos*, the Nicolás Ruiz community, and the Northern Zone of Chiapas.⁴⁸ Through examining the role of human rights in the Zapatista movement, Speed argues that local usages and reinterpretations fundamentally alter the concept of human rights, which may challenge neoliberal discourses and power structures.⁴⁹

METHODOLOGY

In this study, I examine Marcos' communiqués published in *Autónomedia*,⁵⁰ Ponce de León and Saramago,⁵¹ and Vodovnik.⁵² Additionally, I analyze a 1994 *60 Minutes* televised interview with Marcos produced by John Hamlin and *Corridos sin rostro (Ballads Without a Face)*, a documentary film by director Othello Khanh that features interviews with EZLN leaders. These EZLN public

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁵ Barmeyer, *Developing Zapatista Autonomy*.

⁴⁶ Nick Henck, "Laying a Ghost to Rest: Subcommander Marcos' Playing of the Indigenous Card," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 155-170.

⁴⁷ Shannon Speed, *Rights in Rebellion: Indigenous Struggle and Human Rights in Chiapas*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 12.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁰ *Autónomedia*, *Zapatistas! Documents from the New Mexican Revolution*, accessed June 4, 2010, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/Zapatistas/index.html>.

⁵¹ J. Ponce de León and J. Saramago, *Our Word is our Weapon: Selected Writings by Subcommandante Insurgente Marcos* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002).

⁵² Ziga Vodovnik, "Introduction and Chapter 1: Subcommandante Marcos - 1994-1996 Spreading the Word," in *Ya Basta! Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004).

statements and appearances provide a broad sampling of EZLN communications in the critical year following the January 1, 1994 insurrection.

Table 1: Zapatista communiqués and interviews examined for this study

Source	Title	Date	Year
LANIC	El Despertador Mexicano	31-Dec	1993
LANIC	Responses to Government Lies	6-Jan	1994
LANIC	What Are They Going to Forgive Us For?	18-Jan	1994
LANIC	On Misunderstandings About the EZLN and the Real First Uprising	26-Jan	1994
LANIC	The Southeast in Two Winds	27-Jan	1994
LANIC	A Thank You to the NGOs	1-Mar	1994
LANIC	On the Outcome of the Dialogue	1-Mar	1994
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	In Our Dreams We Have Seen Another World	1-Mar	1994
Hamlin (1994)	60 Minutes Interview of Marcos	March	1994
LANIC	We Are Surrounded	26-Apr	1994
LANIC	To the Workers of the Republic	1-May	1994
LANIC	Interview with Subcommander Marcos	11-May	1994
LANIC	Second Declaration from the Lacandona Jungle	10-Jun	1994
LANIC	Responses to the Peace Accord Proposal	10-Jun	1994
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	The Story of the Colors	Oct	1994
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	The Story of the Questions	Dec	1994
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	Come, Brothers and Sisters	12-Mar	1995
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	A Year of the Zapatista Government	17-Mar	1995
Vodovnik (2004)	That Reason Wins Always and Never Force	25-Mar	1995
Vodovnik (2004)	Why Marcos Is Not at the Dialogue	5-May	1995
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	The Story of the Mirrors	June 9-11	1995
Vodovnik (2004)	To Solidarity Groups Meeting in Brescia "The Flowers, Like Hope, Are Harvested"	August	1995

Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	The Word and the Silence	12-Oct	1995
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	The Story of the Cold Foot and the Hot Foot	27-Oct	1995
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	Ten Years Later: Durito Found Us Again	25-Dec	1995
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	The Story of Dreams	Dec	1995
Othello Khanh (1995)	Corridos sin rostro (Ballads Without a Face)		1995
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (excerpt)	1-Jan	1996
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	The Story of the Seven Rainbows	7-Jan	1996
Ponce de León & Saramago (2002)	The Story of the Bean-Brown Horse	9-Jan	1996

To generate this theory, I will employ a discourse analysis methodology with a genre typology approach. Discourse analysis is “A study of the way versions or [sic] the world, society, events and psyche are produced in the use of language and discourse. The Foucauldian version is concerned with the construction of subjects within various forms of knowledge/power.”⁵³ Thus, discourse analysis is an appropriate approach to the study of Marcos’ communiqués and public statements.

I employ a genre typology approach to deduce the major themes and concepts of the communiqués and interviews. Hughes defines “genre” as “the division and grouping of texts on the basis of formal, thematic, or stylistic criteria.”⁵⁴ The unit of observation is each of Marcos’ communiqués and public statements included in the sampling of his work. The units of analysis employed are the discourse frameworks, themes or concepts appearing multiple times, tone, prosody or the stress and intonation patterns, and semantics. The syntax and grammar of Marcos’ communications are not as relevant as units of analysis since the units of observation are translated from the original Spanish into English and the two languages have differing rules of grammar and syntax. I examine both manifest content (“visible, surface content”⁵⁵) and latent content (“underlying meaning of the communication”⁵⁶) to form a more complete understanding of Marcos’ messages and the emerging patterns that reveal a

⁵³ Creativity and Cognition Studios, accessed July 16, 2010, <http://www.creativityandcognition.com/content/view/129/131>.

⁵⁴ William Hughes, “Genre,” *The New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* 3 (2005): 912.

⁵⁵ Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 325.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

grounded theory to explain his success in garnering the aid and attention of national and global actors.

Additionally, I use the constant comparative method to classify the units of analysis in Marcos' communications and recognize patterns in the data. Babbie observes that the grounded theory approach uses the constant comparative method.⁵⁷ This method, which is used to discover patterns and relationships in data that are then clustered into thematic categories, entails four main steps: "comparing incidents applicable in each thematic category," "integrating categories and their properties," "delimiting the theory," and "writing theory."⁵⁸ After reviewing the aforementioned units of analysis, I develop clusters of categories of recurrent communication techniques, language usage, or other communication strategies used by EZLN public relations leaders, principally Marcos. In this way, I elucidate the major themes and rhetorical and literary techniques of EZLN communiqués and public appearances while taking into account the semantics of Marcos' messages.

FINDINGS: PATTERNS AND RECURRING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES OBSERVED

Visibility and Voice

Marcos frequently uses a testimonial style of narration — a discourse technique characterized by giving a "firsthand" or "eyewitness" account of a situation — to create a conception of the Zapatistas as a unified, cohesive whole, to increase the visibility and voice of the Zapatistas (indeed recognizing that they have, and have the *right* to have, a voice in Mexican politics), and to challenge the Mexican government's domination of the Mexican information space. By telling the Zapatista "story" from the Zapatista "angle," and thus including himself — a non-indigenous academic of elite origins — among the impoverished, marginalized indigenous peoples and *campesinos* of Chiapas, Marcos channels the collective Zapatista demands, sufferings, beliefs, and values. Marcos' use of the testimonial style is evident in a particularly forceful and emotive passage, where Marcos asks a series of rhetorical questions designed to undercut the Mexican government's "pardon" of the EZLN as well as to validate the Zapatista "cause":

What do we have to ask forgiveness for? What are they going to "pardon" us for? For not dying of hunger? For not accepting our misery in silence? For not humbly accepting the huge historic burden of disdain and abandonment? For having risen up in arms when we found all other paths closed?⁵⁹

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁵⁸ Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967), 105-113.

⁵⁹ "What Are They Going to Forgive Us For?" (January 18, 1994).

This passage illustrates how Marcos uses the testimonial style by writing from the perspective of the Zapatistas with the use of “we” and “us” in reference to the Zapatistas, or more specifically, the poor *campesinos*, the majority of whom are of varied indigenous descent, and their allies and advocates. Marcos refers to Mexican government officials, soldiers, and their auxiliaries as “they,” thereby framing the government as the distant “other,” separate from the collective Zapatistas and their just cause. Writing from the Zapatistas’ angle, Marcos portrays the Zapatista conflict as righteous, just, and noble, with the Zapatistas as “dignified,” honorable people who are oppressed by a cruel government and left with no choice but to engage in armed aggression against the government perpetrators. Many of Marcos’ communiqués are characterized by the heavy use of pathos, including this one, which further validate the Zapatistas as “good” or innocent and the government as “bad” or “evil.”

Another key purpose of the testimonial style was to convey that Marcos (speaking on behalf of the Zapatistas) witnessed the oppression of the Zapatistas firsthand, a framing technique that is highly attentive to the concept of the spectacle and other visually expressive forms. Such a discourse framework serves to make the Zapatista plight “visible” in the media and in the political realm.

Marcos clarifies the EZLN’s goals insofar as creating a “voice” for those historically barred from Mexican political participation: “We are proposing a space, an equilibrium between the different political forces, in order that each position has the same opportunity to influence the political direction of this country, not by backroom deals, corruption, or blackmail, but by convincing the majority of the people that their position is best.”⁶⁰ Marcos proposes a political space in which all Mexican citizens would have an equal opportunity for democratic participation; everyone would have an equal opportunity to speak and be heard.

In another instance, Marcos draws the reader into the struggle on a personal and emotional level to describe his efforts to make the invisible visible and the ignored heard. He writes, “With old pain and new death, our heart speaks to you so that your hearts may listen. Just in living we were in pain, just in being we hurt. Being silent, our voice was passing away. Our voice spoke of peace, but not of yesterday’s peace, which was dead. Our voice spoke of tomorrow’s peace.”⁶¹ Marcos mentions the “old pain” of the historic persecution and exclusion of the agrarian indigenous peasants in the Mexican state as well as the “new death” of the military crackdown on the Zapatistas. He underscores that these indigenous and non-indigenous poor suffered, which justified their struggle to improve their socioeconomic and political status. By not voicing their concerns and needs in the Mexican political system, their “voice” was stifled and

⁶⁰ “Interview with Subcommander Marcos” (May 11, 1994).

⁶¹ “Come, Brothers and Sisters” (March 12, 1995).

dying away. This piece, which is characteristic of much of Marcos' work, is infused with optimism for an idyllic, utopian future in which all people have equal access to the government. Also, the theme of "death," which prevails in this passage and others, suggests that the PRI system was defunct and that a new political model was needed, in which everyone has a voice and is seen. Speed notes, "the Zapatista movement contributed to bringing indigenous peoples into the national consciousness and indigenous rights onto the national agenda, where they had long been excluded through assimilationism and the myth of *mestizaje*."⁶² Thus, Marcos was attempting to create a political space for indigenous people to retain their "*usos y costumbres*" – their cultural heritage, languages, and value systems – without having to conform to those of the Mexican elite – largely of European descent.

Undoubtedly, communication was central to EZLN efforts to open up this space for political dialogue in the midst of the PRI's stranglehold on the Mexican media. As Ronfeldt, Arquilla, Fuller, and Fuller (1998) note, the Zapatistas' use of the nascent Internet helped to propagate their messages worldwide and generate support. Marcos notes, "We are saying, 'Let's destroy this state, this state system. Let's open up this space and confront the people with ideas, not with weapons.'"⁶³ Thus, Marcos emphasizes that the EZLN's strategy has shifted from armed combat to engaging the government in democratic discourse to challenge the established PRI system.

The "Evil Government"

Many of Marcos' communiqués focus on propagating criticism of the Mexican government, then under the control of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Specifically, he frames the government as "bad" or "evil" to construct a negative image of it and its intentions. For instance, in reference to the PRI rule he writes of the "insatiable ambition of a 70-year dictatorship led by a clique of traitors who represent the most conservative and sell-out groups."⁶⁴ By framing the PRI government as "traitors" and "sell-outs," Marcos highlights the lack of dignity, honesty, and integrity of government officials, depicting them as corrupt individuals willing to betray those whom they represent for their own benefit. Moreover, by labeling the PRI as a "dictatorship," Marcos challenges the pretence of democratic governance in Mexico. Such terminology likely captured the attention of North American NGOs concerned with promoting democracy in Latin America.

Moreover, Marcos attempts to frame a discourse that would undermine the greater Mexican public's trust in the PRI government, which he argues is a corrupt institution that is not salvageable. By framing the PRI as "evil" and "corrupt," Marcos directly challenges its legitimacy. He argues, "we [the

⁶² Shannon Speed, *Rights in Rebellion*.

⁶³ "Interview with Subcommander Marcos" (May 11, 1994).

⁶⁴ "El Despertador Mexicano" (December 31, 1993).

Zapatistas] call for the resignation of the illegitimate government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and for the formation of a new, democratic transitional government that would guarantee fair elections on all levels of government.”⁶⁵ Thus, Marcos frames the Salinas de Gortari government as corrupt and undemocratic, having come to power through fixed (and thus, illegitimate) elections.

Furthermore, Marcos asserts that “[o]nly those who have based their success on the theft of the public trust, those who protect criminals and murderers by prostituting justice, those who resort to political murder and electoral fraud in order to impose their will, are opposed to our demands.”⁶⁶ Marcos frames his discourse in such a logic that if you, as the reader, oppose the Zapatistas, then you must be dishonest, deceptive, and in favor of committing crimes against humanity to impose your will at the expense of innocents. Again, the terms “prostituting justice” and “theft of the public trust” suggest that the government engages in illicit activities such as protecting those who break the law and cause great harm to society. Thus, Marcos attempts to thwart any government attempts to establish legitimacy.

Moreover, Marcos repeatedly mentions “Power” (capitalized for emphasis) to describe not only the PRI government, but also the *coletos*⁶⁷ class in Chiapas and the United States government. Marcos illustrates the centrality of communication in the Zapatistas’ efforts by discussing how “Power” in its various forms has tried to undercut the power of the people:

Speaking and listening is how true men and women learn to walk. It is the word that gives form to that walk that goes on inside us. It is the word that is the bridge to cross to the other side. Silence is what Power offers our pain in order to make us small. When we are silenced, we remain very much alone. Speaking, we heal the pain. Speaking, we accompany one another. Power uses the word to impose his empire of silence. We use the word to renew ourselves. Power uses silence to hide his crimes. We use silence to listen to one another, to touch one another, to know one another.⁶⁸

Marcos frames “Power” as a repressive agent that prevents people from “walking,” or improving or changing their circumstances or progressing through

⁶⁵ “Responses to Government Lies” (January 6, 1994).

⁶⁶ “Second Declaration from the Lacandona Jungle” (June 10, 1994).

⁶⁷ *Coletos* refers to an elite class in southern Mexico who proudly assert their Spanish heritage. According to Speed (2008), “*Coletos* adopted the identity traits of the old *criollo* families, asserting their Spanish heritage and reviving the myths of ‘conquistador ancestors’” (66). Often *coletos* were privileged ranchers who exploited and abused the peasant farmers of indigenous descent. The PRI government often sided with them in disputes with the peasants. Thus, they could be included in the realm of “Power” mentioned by Marcos due to their privileged social status in Chiapas.

⁶⁸ “The Word and the Silence” (October 12, 1995).

communication (“the word”). Marcos describes “Power” as using “silence” as a weapon against humble people to conceal its crimes and corruption, whereas the Zapatistas or the indigenous people use it to preserve their cultural identity (“renew” themselves) and facilitate dialogue between the governors and the governed. The “empire of silence” phrase suggests a link to the familiar Latin American discourse against North American (and perhaps European) imperialism. Thus, Marcos conceptualizes “silence” as a powerful weapon that can be used for good or evil purposes.

The technique of framing the conflict in diametrically opposite terms – dark and light, white and black, good and bad, day and night – is recurrent throughout the communiqués examined. Marcos often portrays the two forms of government in terms of “good” (Zapatistas) versus “bad” (Mexican government under PRI rule) to create a polarized view of the two governments. Marcos may have used this technique to appeal to some indigenous groups’ conceptions of themselves as good and outsiders as evil, a concept formed largely from their painful experiences with slavery, violence, and oppression at the hands of foreigners. Speed (2008) explains in reference to the Chols, “Alejos Garcia argues that they developed a binary understanding of the world, in which Chols were equated with good, and Kaxlanes, or non-Chols, with evil.” Marcos likely appealed to this antithetical understanding of the world to mobilize the Zapatista indigenous base.

The Quest for Dignity

In addition to challenging the legitimacy of the PRI government, Marcos frames the government as “undignified” or “without honor or integrity.” Such a framework adds a moral dimension to his discourse. Marcos writes, “It wasn’t enough for him to deny us a face and a life. He wanted to humble the dignity of our step, trample our just demands, take truth from our song, bury our flag in oblivion. With the complicity of big money and a foreign vocation, he wanted to humiliate us, even in our speech. Turning back the wheel of history, he wanted to force us with bayonets to deny our history.”⁶⁹ Marcos underscores that an erasure of indigenous culture and history occurred. The “he” mentioned is likely Salinas de Gortari. “Big money” refers to the private multinational corporations, mostly U.S.-based, that are “complicit” with the Mexican government. This passage overtly draws attention to Marcos’ strategy of keeping the Zapatistas in the national and international spotlight rather than have the movement die out and fall into “oblivion” through government censorship of Zapatista communiqués in the Mexican information space. Marcos accuses Salinas de Gortari of taking “dignity” from the Zapatistas by “humiliating” them, or denying them “dignity” – “even in [their] speech.” The Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 holds that basic human dignity is the basis of human

⁶⁹ “Come, Brothers and Sisters” (March 12, 1995).

rights as a discursive frame. Thus, Marcos uses dignity as a global point of reference for asserting PRI violations of Zapatista rights. Also, by highlighting the significance of speech in this way, Marcos frames “speaking” as an elemental human entitlement — a principal unit of human dignity. He also frames the discourse so that the Zapatista cause is “just” and “true” and the government is the opposite. Marcos continually emphasizes that any reconciliation between the Zapatistas and the government has to be “dignified”:

Under siege and under pressure from different sectors that threatened us with extermination if the peace accords weren't signed, we Zapatistas reaffirmed our commitment to achieve a peace with justice and dignity. In our struggle, the dignified struggle of our ancestors has found a home. The cry of dignity of the insurgent Vicente Guerrero, “Live for the country or die for freedom,” once again sounds from our throats. We cannot accept an undignified peace.⁷⁰

Marcos frames the indigenous peoples as “dignified,” a marked departure from historically ethnocentric and arrogant views of colonial Spanish *conquistadores* who perpetuated the idea of indigenous peoples as “uncivilized” and “savage” beings, inherently “inferior” to Europeans. Marcos challenges this preconception in his discourse, promoting a new conception of indigenous peoples as “dignified” and “honorable” societies who have bravely resisted colonial and modern repression and sought “justice” against difficult odds. Even amidst enormous pressure and faced with the threat of “extermination,” a term that Marcos uses to symbolize the death of the indigenous identity movement and the Zapatista movement, Marcos asserts that the Zapatistas are committed to upholding their principles of “dignity.” Thus, Marcos challenges preconceived post-Enlightenment European notions of the character of indigenous peoples and redefines them as strong, upright Mexican citizens deserving of political inclusion.

Uniting Under a Nationalist and Protectionist Framework

Part of the reason that the Zapatista revolution captivated international attention was that it was not interested in toppling the Mexican state or taking over the government, but rather working to improve the preexisting nationalist framework. While the Zapatistas wanted to destroy the PRI system of government and the enormous powers of the executive branch under that system (including the *dedazo*⁷¹), they demanded a transition to a legitimate democracy in which the people have greater ability to select their government representatives.

⁷⁰ “Second Declaration from the Lacandona Jungle” (June 10, 1994).

⁷¹ *Dedazo* is the selection of one's successor, a practice that occurred in the PRI system despite the nominal presence of elections to give the impression that Mexico was a democracy. Such elections were generally fixed.

“Democracy, Liberty, and Justice”: these three words are the closing of practically every Zapatista communiqué examined from January 1994 onward, and thus they are significant. These words resemble the classic closing exclamations of indigenous revolutionary Emiliano Zapata’s communiqués during the Mexican Revolution: “Reform, Liberty, Justice, and Law,” which Marcos names the “original Zapatista manifesto, written in Nahuatl.”⁷² Marcos has altered Zapata’s discourse slightly, removing calls for “reform and law” and emphasizing the call for “democracy” and political inclusion of all Mexican citizens. In a communiqué addressed to “the people of Mexico,” “the people and governments of the world,” and “the national and international press,” Marcos elaborates on the intended meaning of these three words: “Justice! Freedom! Democracy! These are the three keys to the three chains. Justice in the right to a dignified job and to be well paid. Freedom in the right to organize ourselves with independence from the powerful and their spokespeople. Democracy in the right to demand that the government obey us in its mandate.”⁷³ Essentially, Marcos is advocating a democratic government that is based on the will of the people, that encourages independent organization and that also upholds labor standards – discourses likely to appeal to national and global actors, and to non-elite, working Mexican citizens alike.

In preparation for NAFTA’s implementation, the Mexican constitution of 1917, one of the hard-earned products of the Mexican Revolution, was amended in 1991 and the changes were implemented in 1992.⁷⁴ Article 27 of the constitution “formally ended over seventy years of land redistribution, ending the state’s obligation to redistribute land and opening previously inalienable *ejido* lands to privatization (Bartra 1991; Collier 1994c; Cornelius and Myhre 1998).”⁷⁵ Thus, many *campesinos* lost their right to land, which many depended on for subsistence agriculture, with the breakup of the state-owned and -allocated *ejido* system. Emiliano Zapata and other leaders of the Mexican Revolution had rallied to demand the farmers’ right to own land. It is no coincidence that Zapata is the namesake of the Zapatista revolution, as the removal of the state-guaranteed land for the peasant farmers from the constitution was a major point of protest for the Zapatistas. Marcos cites a key tenet of Zapatismo that the government must meet: “A demand that Article 27 of the Constitution respect the original spirit of Emiliano Zapata: The land belongs to those who work it.”⁷⁶ Thus, the foundation laid by the leaders of the Mexican Revolution, especially Zapata’s discourse in favor of the right to own land, was a central feature in the Zapatista discourse. Marcos also highlights the government’s complicity in the sale of Mexican resources to foreign-owned enterprises, stating, “Power’s servant smiles

⁷² “Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (excerpt)” (January 1, 1996).

⁷³ “To the Workers of the Republic” (May 1, 1994).

⁷⁴ Shannon Speed, *Rights in Rebellion*, 45.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ “Responses to the Peace Accord Proposal” (June 10, 1994).

while he negotiates overseas a price for the motherland.”⁷⁷ In such a statement, Marcos implies that “Power” has no “dignity” and will sell precious resources for profit at the expense of the peasant farmers.

Drawing upon the legacy of the discourse rooted in the Mexican Revolution, Marcos decries foreign control of Mexican resources and advocated protectionism – the antithesis of the neoliberal reforms passed by the Mexican government to enter NAFTA, which were designed to reduce state interference in the economy. Resource nationalism is a recurring theme in his discourse. He states, “We demand an end to the looting of our national resources.”⁷⁸ Chiapas is a resource-rich area of Mexico, with an abundance of natural resources and agricultural products. In one of his earliest communiqués, Marcos describes the “bleeding” of natural resources from Chiapas in Marxist-Leninist language: “This land continues to pay tribute to the imperialists: petroleum, electricity, cattle, money, coffee . . . and Chiapaneco blood flows as a result of the thousand teeth sunk into the throat of the Mexican Southeast.”⁷⁹ He emphasizes that the *campesinos* of Chiapas who labored to produce these goods for export rarely enjoyed these goods for themselves and were mired in grinding poverty. While Marcos shies away from continuing along the vein of anti-imperialism in subsequent communiqués, the theme of anti-capitalism is a key tenet of Zapatismo.

Neoliberal Capitalism

Marcos frequently engages in a discourse against neoliberal capitalism – often framing it as the insidious enemy of Zapatismo: “Businesses of evil wealth have a new etiquette. Another mask hides our pain from our own eyes. A new name has been given to injustice, to slavery, to the usurpation: neoliberalism.”⁸⁰ This line is set apart from the rest of the text for emphasis. Marcos compares the hegemony of the neoliberal ideology to a concealing mask similar to the trademark black ski masks worn by the EZLN warriors. This passage suggests that the businesses benefiting from neoliberal policies acquired their “evil wealth” through unethical and unjust methods that maintain the peasant underclass in a state of virtual slavery. Katz asserts, “The critics [of neoliberalism] argue that the policies and practices of neoliberal globalization increase the wealth and power of the few at the expense of the many.”⁸¹ Marcos subscribes to this logic and argues that the victims of neoliberalism are the impoverished *campesinos* on behalf of whom he advocates. Brysk observes that 80 percent of Mexicans living in poverty are indigenous and typically earn 30 percent of what their non-indigenous counterparts make.⁸² Thus, Marcos frames

⁷⁷ “The Word and the Silence” (October 12, 1995).

⁷⁸ “Responses to the Peace Accord Proposal” (June 10, 1994).

⁷⁹ “The Southeast in Two Winds” (written in August 1992, published on January 27, 1994).

⁸⁰ “To the Workers of the Republic” (May 1, 1994).

⁸¹ Katz, “Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks,” 334.

⁸² Brysk, *Economic Adjustment and Ethnic Conflict in Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico*, 17.

neoliberalism as an ideology that is likely to exacerbate the already dire economic circumstances of Mexico's indigenous peoples.

Speed argues, "The Zapatista uprising was, in many ways, a recognition by indigenous communities that the terms of rule had changed and an assertion of their intention to play an active role in the renegotiation of their relationship to the state in the context of neoliberal globalization."⁸³ In a communiqué addressed to Zapatista solidarity groups meeting in Brescia, Italy, Marcos emphasizes the presence of the indigenous peoples in the trend toward neoliberalism: "Today the thick mantle with which they try to cover their crime is called neoliberalism, and it represents death and misery for the original people of these lands, and for all of those of a different skin color but with a single indigenous heart that we call Mexicans."⁸⁴ Marcos frames the government's implementation of neoliberalism as a "crime" for removing state protection of indigenous lands and leaving them with the impossibility of competing with foreign products such as corn from the U.S. (which enjoys substantial protectionist subsidies from the U.S. government and benefits from modern production methods) that the indigenous corn farmers of Chiapas cannot possibly compete with without state assistance. Marcos mentions "death" in the sense of culture, traditions, and languages – perhaps even identities – of indigenous peoples as a result of the purportedly homogenizing effects of globalization.

Marcos continues, "The great international criminal, money, today has a name that reflects the incapacity of Power to create new things. We suffer a new world war today. It is a war against all of the peoples, of human beings, of culture, of history. It is a war headed by a handful of financial centers without homeland and without shame, an international war: money versus humanity. They call it Neoliberalism now, this Terror Intentional." He appeals to Zapatista allies in Italy by comparing neoliberalism to the world wars that devastated Italy. He also appeals to socialist sentiments – popular in Italy – by blaming the greed, immorality, and lack of *patria* or national pride and dignity of financial institutions, which he frames as criminal, for crimes against humanity. His mention of a war against "culture" and "history" indicates that he frames neoliberalism as a threat against indigenous rights, as it may negate the traditional ways of life of indigenous peoples as they struggle to compete, perhaps even survive, in a global economy. He equates neoliberalism with a terrorist organization to emphasize the deleterious effects of neoliberal policies on the indigenous peoples of Mexico.

Use of Metaphor

Marcos' use of metaphor appears frequently in the "Stories" he tells, which usually feature characters such as "Old Don Antonio," an indigenous village elder who tells Marcos many of the stories, and Marcos' alter-ego, "Don Durito,"

⁸³ Shannon Speed, *Rights in Rebellion*, 22.

⁸⁴ "The Word and the Silence" (October 12, 1995).

a “smoking beetle” who is the “greatest knight-errant the world has ever seen.” Marcos’ description of Don Durito as a “knight-errant” refers to Cervantes’ work on *Don Quijote*, the story of a deluded old man and what he considered valiant quests. By such means Marcos pokes fun at himself and his revolutionary mission. These stories most closely fit the genre of magic realism and frequently are told in a testimonial style in vivid detail, thereby making the Zapatista demands more visible to the reader.

In “The Story of the Colors,” Marcos uses the metaphor of a colorful macaw to represent Mexico with its diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and races. This story served to further the discourse of indigenous rights in Mexico, indeed making their cultural distinctness visible. During the 1991–1992 constitutional reforms, Article 4 of the constitution was amended to define Mexico as a “multicultural nation.”⁸⁵ Old Don Antonio tells Marcos the story of how the macaw got its color:⁸⁶

And the gods were fighting because the world was very boring, painted in just two colors. And their anger was just because only two colors shared in the world: one was the black sent by night, and the other was the white that walked by day. There was a third that wasn’t really a color. It was the gray that paints dusk and dawn so the black and white won’t bump against each other.

In this passage, Marcos presents a metaphor to describe a discourse in which the indigenous people are barred from political access in Mexico. Also, it illustrates the dividedness or lack of unity among different “colors” of people in Mexico. The concept of dichotomous discourse appears in this passage as well.

The stories often have a moral, perhaps utopian, message as well. For instance, in reference to the macaw, Marcos writes, “Now it strolls around in case men and women forget that there are many colors and ways of thinking in the world, and how happy the world will be when all the colors and ways of thinking have a place.”⁸⁷ Thus, Marcos encourages the tolerance and inclusion of people of diverse background and cultures.

Marcos typically closes his communiqués with “From the Mountains of Southeast Mexico.” The mountains can be understood as a metaphor for the powerful, imposing Mexican government, or “Power” in its various forms. The fact that the Zapatistas resided *within* the mountains indicates that they too were part of the “Power” and played a role in shaping it. Also, the fact that they were in the southeast of Mexico, a historically marginalized area where many indigenous people were forced to relocate to by their colonial oppressors,

⁸⁵ Shannon Speed, *Rights in Rebellion*, 31.

⁸⁶ “The Story of the Colors” (October 1994).

⁸⁷ “The Story of the Colors” (October 1994).

illustrates that even marginalized groups have a place in the structure of “Power” and have the ability to alter that structure.

CONCLUSION: A GROUNDED THEORY

Based on the evidence observed throughout the communiqués and videos examined, I conclude that Marcos employed discourses that fell within preexisting discourse frameworks circulating throughout Mexican national and global civil society. Such a strategy would facilitate a greater acceptance of the Zapatista message (which changed over the years) within the national and global civic arenas as well as appeal to the broadest audience possible. By working within and engaging in such discourse frameworks, Marcos was able to challenge conventional understandings of the power dynamics between local and the state actors. This enabled him to succeed in increasing the visibility and voice of the *campesinos* and indigenous peoples of the Chiapas conflict zone on a local, national, and global scale. In other words, he succeeded in opening up a political space for these individuals, who were historically denied such political access either through structural barriers to access or from discrimination, classism, and ethnocentrism in the PRI political system.

For instance, during the early years of the Zapatista movement, indigenous rights movements were gaining momentum throughout Latin America. Notably, Guatemalan indigenous rights activist and 1992 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Rigoberta Menchú pioneered the “500 Years of Resistance Campaign” to protest the quincentenary celebration of Columbus’s “discovery” of the Americas. Brysk notes, “Menchú’s organizing tool has been the recovery of history . . .”⁸⁸ Marcos borrowed themes of indigenous rights discourse for his communiqués, namely the obliteration of indigenous history and the 500 years of resistance concept, which appear throughout his communiqués.

Moreover, Brysk argues, “The turn toward postmodern nationalism is part of a broader trend toward identity politics: domestic and transnational group mobilization based on ascriptive characteristics and ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991).”⁸⁹ Marcos framed the Zapatistas as a community in his discourse, even though the Zapatistas were an eclectic group of indigenous peoples of great cultural and linguistic diversity, Hispanic and *mestizo* peasant farmers and their allies scattered throughout the globe. By framing the Zapatistas as a cohesive “community,” Marcos created an appealing vision of solidarity in the Zapatista movement that fostered expanded mobilization.

In addition to indigenous rights discourse, Marcos also engaged in human rights discourse. He leveraged this globalized discourse to shield the Zapatistas from physical and emotional acts of violence and intimidation by the Mexican government, and to promote the democratic participation of the

⁸⁸ Brysk, *Economic Adjustment and Ethnic Conflict in Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico*, 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

Chiapan *campesinos* of indigenous and non-indigenous descent. Through his discourse he presented an image of the Mexican government and military as an authoritarian and “evil” institution of “repression” that violated elemental human freedoms. This likely captured the attention of civil society.

Significantly, Marcos’ discourse emphasized the importance of “dignity” – a concept that is understood and valued in many cultures.⁹⁰ This concept embodies honor, integrity, and worthiness. The term serves the purpose of altering the post-Enlightenment appeal to shared notions of human dignity to acknowledge cultural specificity. Marcos’ emphasized the dignity of the indigenous peoples and frames their plight as an ongoing struggle against European repression, and to preserve their languages, community-oriented identity, and ways of life against pressure from “Power,” or hegemonic forces. Thus, he attempted to reshape preconceptions about indigenous peoples as worthy for inclusion and participation in Mexican society. He framed them as worthy of being seen and heard – worthy of existing.

In this same vein, Marcos railed against neoliberal capitalism as an “evil” policy designed to “exterminate” the indigenous peoples of Chiapas. He drew attention to the homogenizing influence of such policies and the pressure to conform to the dominant neoliberal ideology they promulgate. Thus, he challenged the conventional wisdom that neoliberal policies yield significant opportunities for individual citizens to develop economically. Rather, he argued that such policies undermine the basic communal farming culture of many of Mexico’s indigenous communities and place impoverished indigenous people in a position such that they cannot continue their traditional way of life or compete globally. He warned that their way of life would be destroyed by such policies, which would force them to adopt alternative livelihoods and would erode the community-oriented, consensus-driven style of governance they employ. Thus, Marcos’ discourse appealed to actors in civil society that were concerned with preserving indigenous cultures and instituting pride in their traditions.

Marcos not only attempted to bolster indigenous pride; he also attempted to create a sense of intrigue about indigenous culture in his non-indigenous (and perhaps indigenous) audience. He utilized metaphors, stories, poetic language, and the popular Mexican literature genre of magic realism to create this sense of intrigue. By doing this, he was demonstrating the value of creativity, diversity, and different epistemologies and ways of knowing and therefore, the value of preserving Mexico’s indigenous heritage.

Another way in which Marcos appealed to the *campesinos*, most of whom were of indigenous heritage, was by reviving the discourse of the Mexican Revolution, particularly that of Emiliano Zapata, who pushed for agrarian reform and the right of farmers to have state-allocated land to farm. Marcos decried foreign ownership of Mexican national resources, which he saw as a

⁹⁰ Ibid.

betrayal of a central tenet of the Mexican Revolution that resulted in the nationalization of previously foreign-owned industries such as petroleum (forming Pemex). In particular, he expressed outrage over the paradox that the *campesinos* who lived in resource-rich Chiapas and produced commodities for export to foreign destinations rarely enjoyed the commodities they produced, as they were mired in seemingly insurmountable poverty. Marcos' discourse continued the struggle of the Mexican Revolution, advocating that the wealth generated from Mexico's substantial natural resources be spread more equitably among the Mexican population rather than benefiting a small privileged group of elites embedded with foreign multinationals. Some of Marcos' discourse could be interpreted as pro-socialist. This is particularly the case in his communiqués from early 1994, which reflected a Marxist-Leninist bent as well as his subsequent communiqués in late 1995 to early 1996, which denounced "money" and profit at the expense of the workers. In fact, "Marcos," whose birth name is Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, could be a reference to Marx. Marcos likely implemented such a discourse to appeal to the *campesinos* and mobilize the Mexican workforce in support of the Zapatistas.

In conclusion, Marcos altered preexisting discourses to achieve maximum mobilization for the Zapatista movement. He reached out to national and global actors in civil society, employing and leveraging discourse frameworks that would appeal to them so as to garner their support. By framing the PRI government and neoliberalism as "evil" and questioning the legitimacy of its power through his discourse, Marcos was able to challenge preexisting notions of the power dynamics between local communities and the state. He also aimed to foster a sense of pride and intrigue about Mexico's indigenous peoples and alter preexisting and deeply seated prejudices held by elite Mexicans about the indigenous by demonstrating their "dignity" and worthiness of inclusion in Mexican society as well as the value of pluriculturality and different ways of thinking and knowing. By reviving Zapata's pro-worker and nationalist discourse in the Mexican Revolution and furthering Menchú's pro-indigenous discourse on "500 years of resistance" and the "recovery of history," Marcos was able to mobilize and invigorate the Zapatistas' indigenous and *campesino* base as well as push the movement beyond national bounds to appeal to sympathizers around the globe.